

SMALL GROUP EXCURSION
ELK BUGLING HIKE IN THE WICHITA MOUNTAINS

When: Saturday, October 5

What: Family friendly late afternoon hike.

We will meet at the church at 3:30 PM, then convoy the 1 hour 45 minutes to the Sunset Picnic area, near the western boundary of the Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge.

For details, contact Dave Thompson (cell 405-719-4148; email davidmthompson825@gmail.com)

We will meet at the church at 3:30 PM and convoy the one hour and 45 minutes that it takes to get down I-44, exit at Medicine Park, and make our way to the west end of the Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge and the trailhead parking at the Sunset picnic area. On the way, we'll stop inside the Refuge at a "prairie dog village," which is always a popular experience for kids.

We can provide rides for those who'd prefer to leave their vehicles at the church.

This time of year, we can hear bull elks "bugling," making high pitched calls to alert females to their locations. In Oklahoma, the elk mating season starts in mid-September and runs into mid-October. On our previous hikes, we have seen several of these impressive animals. Binoculars are handy, and I will bring several pairs. I will also bring bottles of water and snacks like granola bars and fruit, but feel free to bring your own.

Refuge rules require that we be back to the cars by sunset, which will be at 7:12 PM. After we return to the cars, anyone who is interested can convoy to the nearby town of Medicine Park, where can have dinner at one of the town's simple restaurants. Those who elect to stay for dinner can expect to return to Oklahoma City around 10 PM.

Some, including families with children, may prefer to return directly to Oklahoma City after the hike. In fact, we have found this is a wonderful family outing. Children as young as 6 have had a wonderful time on previous hikes. We hike slowly hike from the Sunset picnic area toward the west, into the Charon Gardens Wilderness Area and in the general direction of Sunset Peak. There are rocks to climb, cactus to marvel at, prairie dogs and elk!

I know from my routine visits to the Refuge that this year's wonderful Spring rains have produced tall grass, so we'll stick to established trails. Even on the trail, we'll encounter still rocks and cactus --always popular with our younger hikers -- so have sturdy shoes that cover your feet. We walk slowly, looking and listening for elk, so it's easy to avoid hazards. If the weather is warm, you can wear durable shorts, but I generally prefer long pants for this country.

This outing is fun even for people who don't want to hike, because you can stay near the parking area in the Sunset picnic area. You can use the picnic tables and concrete benches, or bring folding chairs, and listen for bugling as sunset nears.